DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

PRESENTATION TO COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE ON BENEFITS UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES 108TH CONGRESS

SUBJECT: "Requirement that Employers Rehire Returning Service Members"

STATEMENT OF: 2nd LT. TAYLOR E. ADAMS, USAFR

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED BY THE HOUSE VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

INTRODUCTION

Mr Chairman, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the invitation to testify before you today. I am an Air Force Reservist, assigned to the 315th Maintenance Squadron, part of the 315th Airlift Wing, at Charleston. I also, work for McNaughton-McKay Electrical Co., in Charleston, S.C., also home to the distinguished Chairman. McNaughton-McKay is an electrical distributor that sells all electrical commodities and especially automation products to industrial customers. I have worked for McNaughton-McKay since I Graduated from Appalachian State University in 1994. Before 9/11 and the activation I was one of four Account Managers in a branch of 15 employees. When I was activated, I left behind 25 percent of the company's accounts. Out of necessity, they hired a new account manager to ensure seamless service to the customers. Since de-activation, my new title is "Automation Consultant" covering not only Charleston SC but Savannah Ga. as well.

I enlisted in the Air Force Reserve in 1989 to help offset college expenses and gain a little perspective on my future. I had always been very good at fixing

things so I took on propulsion in my military career. For about nine years I worked on C-141's in Charleston and around Europe during my annual two weeks. Eventually the 141's left and I transitioned over to the C-17. I had always thought seriously about becoming an officer, if the opportunity arose and, ironically it finally did in 2001, while on active duty for Operation Enduring Freedom.

In the uncertainty after the attacks of 9/11, it looked more and more as if we were going to Afghanistan, and my employer frequently asked me if I thought I would be activated or not. I wanted to give him a definite answer, but there was none. I called the base weekly and sometimes bi-weekly to see if there was any type of definitive answer. McNaughton-McKay wanted to know so that they could start planning to cover my accounts while I was gone. All I could offer was that if I got called up, I would probably have a few days before I had to report to duty. That would be enough time for account planning and transitioning them to new Account Managers.

Sunday night, October 6^{th,} my wife Traci, one of her friends, and I, were having dinner out when my best friend in the Reserve called and told me he just got a call from the base and had been activated. At first I thought he

was joking but then heard the concern in his voice. I quickly called the house to see if I had any messages. There were not any at the time so we finished our dinner and headed home. On the way home we checked the messages again and sure enough there was a message to call the base immediately. I called the section and they told me to report for duty the next day at 4:00 pm. It was about 10:00 at night when I got off the phone and immediately called my boss to tell him I got my call. I told him we had to meet in the morning because instead of a few days to report, I only had a few hours. He was very accommodating and cleared his morning schedule to handle the planning. Just a week earlier David Beattie, President of McNaughton-McKay, had come up with a new policy to pay any one called to active duty their normal pay minus military pay and expense account for a period of six months. This was enormous since I was going to be taking about a 30 percent pay cut from Account Manager to E-5. Along with the pay differential, all benefits remained in tact, as well as my seniority with the company. Unfortunately I had no idea how long the activation would last, but my employer made me feel at ease, they told me to do my job and that they would be looking forward to my return.

The importance of moving people and vehicles, and supplies is the key to winning any war. The number one reason our military is so powerful is because we can get to the war unlike anyone else. Our unit was called up to ensure that C-17's were available at all times. This was evident the first night of Enduring Freedom when our aircraft dropped thousands of meals to the starving people of Afghanistan.

January 27th I was deployed to Germany for 108 days. During that time Traci had many phone calls from people at work checking on her and making sure she didn't need anything in my absence.

When I finally returned to Charleston in May, McNaughton & McKay was curious about how much longer I would be gone from work. Unfortunately I did not have an answer.

I was de-activated on August 15, 2002 and immediately returned to work. The first day back I met with the Sales Manager as well as the General Manager to discuss my future. They first explained how glad they were to have me back and asked if I would be leaving again. I said, "yes, that I needed time off again in October and November to attend the Academy of

Military Science in order to get my commission." Once again they were very accommodating and said it wasn't a problem. I was also given my new position of Automation Consultant since they needed to hire someone in my absence to handle my accounts.

Since then I have asked for time off to be here for this incredible opportunity, as well as for a month next year to attend Aircraft Maintenance Officers School. As with all of the other requests, McNaughton-McKay has accommodated me, without question.

On a visit to the Charleston branch June 25, 2003, I thanked David Beattie again for his policy on activations. He then told me that when activation happens again, as it inevitably will in today's world, he will make sure that I am paid the same benefits as before, except that they will not end until I return from Active Duty.

I am pleased to be an integral part of two great teams, who value me and my family, and I would hope that any employers who are able to do so, would consider providing the same benefits to their Reservists.

Again, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to be here and to thank you for your continued support of our military men and women, and for recognizing the contributions of my boss, David Beattie, as a true patriot.